DEFINING THE MOST IMPORTANT RULINGS OF FASTING

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

All praise belongs to Allah; and may the *salah* and *salam* [of Allah] be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, and those who have given him their loyalty. As for what follows:

Indeed, fasting the month of Ramadan is a pillar from the pillars of Islam. It is upon every Muslim that he complies with and fulfills this pillar in order to complete his submission and compliance to Allah (i.e., Islam); and he can not do that unless he has knowledge of the most important rulings of fasting in Ramadan.

The Definition of Fasting

In the linguistic sense it is to refrain from something, whether that was food, drink, speaking, and other things. He (*ta'ala*) said, "And if you see from among humanity anyone, say, 'Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] man.' "[1] Thus fasting here is to refrain from speech.[2]

In the legal sense it is to refrain from the breakers [of the fast]: eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse, from *fajr* (dawn) to *maghrib* (sunset), alongside having the *niyyah* (intention) [to fast].

[1] Surah Maryam: 26.
[2] See *Lisan al-'Arab*.

The Ruling of Fasting

Fasting the month of Ramadan is a pillar from the pillars of Islam, and it is obligatory upon every Muslim by the text of the Quran, Sunnah, and the consensus of the *ummah*. He (*ta'ala*) said, "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become those with *taqwa*."[3]

And He (*subhanahu*) said, "The month of Ramadan, in which the Quran was revealed; a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever witnesses the month, let him fast it."[4]

And the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Islam is built upon five: the testimony that *la ilaha illallah* and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, to establish *salah*, to pay the *zakah*, [to perform] the Hajj, and fasting Ramadan."[5]

Indeed, the entire *ummah* has agreed that fasting Ramadan is obligatory upon the *Muslimin* and that whoever rejects its obligatory status has disbelieved.[6]

The Conditions for the Obligatory Fast

Fasting is not obligatory except upon:

1. The Muslim; thus it is not obligatory for a *kafir*.
2. The one who is sound in mind; thus it is not obligatory for an insane person.
3. The one who reached puberty; thus it is not obligatory for the child. (However, it is highly recommended to get him accustomed to it for when he reaches puberty.)
4. The one who is healthy; thus it is not obligatory upon the one who is

[3] Surah al-Baqarah: 183.
[4] Surah al-Baqarah: 185.
[5] Agreed upon.
[6] See ibn Hazm adh-Dhahiri, *Maratin al-Ijma'*.

sick, who if he was to fast it would increase his sickness or delay his getting cured.

5. The one who is a resident; thus it is not obligatory upon the one who is traveling. (However, for him to fast if it does not cause him hardship is preferable.)
6. The one who is able; thus it is not obligatory upon the one who lacks the ability, such as the elderly, the sick who is not getting well, and the pregnant and breastfeeding women if it were to cause any harm to them or their children.

The Pillars of Fasting

1. The *niyyah*; it is what is in the heart, and it is sufficient for one to make the intention to fast on the first day to have the intention to fast all of the month. What establishes the *niyyah* is preparing to fast and getting up for the *suhur* (pre-dawn meal) and preparing to abstain from that which breaks the fast at the time of *fajr*, and other similar things.
2. To abstain from what breaks the fast and that is eating, drinking, and sexual relations; meaning, to abstain from the desires of the stomach and private parts.
3. Timing; and the time for fasting is from the true dawn to sunset.

The Virtues of Fasting

The Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan due to *iman* and expectation of the reward, then all of his past sins would be forgiven."[7] Therefore, if you fast Ramadan with *iman* that the fasting of this month is an obligation from Allah (*ta'ala*) and that carrying it out is obligatory - and you do not fast to lose weight or for a cure from a sickness or other reasons - then you have fulfilled the first condition in the *hadith*. And if you fast Ramadan expecting and anticipating the reward and blessings from Allah (*ta'ala*) - and you do not fast Ramadan for *riya* (showing

[7] Collected by al-Bukhari.

off) or for gaining reputation between the people - then you have fulfilled the second condition in the *hadith*. For you is the glad tidings from the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*): "all of his past sins would be forgiven," if Allah wills.

The Wisdom Behind Fasting

Fasting has many great benefits, all of which is from the wisdom that Allah (*ta'ala*) legislated fasting: and it is *taqwa*. It is doing what Allah commanded and preventing oneself from what He (*subhanahu*) has forbidden. He (*ta'ala*) said, "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become those with *taqwa*."[8] And "that you may" here is for a reason; meaning, so that you have *taqwa* of Allah. Thus you leave what Allah has forbidden and do what He has made obligatory.

The Ruling of the One Who Abandons Fasting

There is no blame on one who leaves fasting with a [valid] excuse, like one who leaves it due to illness or due to travelling and the likes due to other excuses. As for the one who abandons fasting in Ramadan without a *shar'i* excuse (legitimate legal excuse), then his state is to be looked at. If he abandons fasting because of laziness or for his desire of eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse, and other things like it, while he affirms the obligation of fasting in Ramadan, and that it is a pillar of Islam, he would be a sinner who is guilty of a sin from the major sins. And if he combines that with breaking his fast in front of people, then he would be a *fasiq*, and he would be of those who openly do acts of disobedience.

Hafidh adh-Dhahabi said, "It is known with the believers that the one who abandons fasting in Ramadan, without any illness or need - meaning that he doesn't have an excuse that permits him to do so - is worst than the *zani*

[8] Surah al-Baqarah: 183.

(perpetrator of illegal sexual intercourse) and the drinker of alcohol."[9]

As for the one who denies the obligation of fasting, and he says for example: "There is no fasting of Ramadan in Islam," then he is a *kafir* by the consensus of the *fuqaha* due to the obligation of fasting Ramadan being known in the *din* by necessity and that it is a pillar on which Islam is based upon. So the one who denies it or permits abandoning it, then he nullifies the foundation of the *din*.

The Punishment For Whoever Abandons the Fast without any Excuse

Punishment here means the punishment in this world for the one who abandons his fast intentionally without a *shar'i* excuse; and there are various punishments for it depending upon the belief of the person regarding the ruling of fasting. Therefore, the one who abandons fasting in Ramadan without an excuse but he does not deny its obligation, then he would be punished and disciplined by lashes or by imprisonment and prevented from eating during the days of Ramadan or by whatever the *imam* decides to punish him with.

The one who abandons fasting alongside permitting it, then he is killed. Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah said, "If he does not fast in Ramadan while believing that it is *halal* to do so, and he knows about it being forbidden, but he still says that it is *halal*, then killing him is obligatory. And if he is a *fasiq* he will be punished according to what the *imam* sees correct, due to him not fasting Ramadan."[10]

Recommended Acts While Fasting

The recommended acts of fasting are many, the most important of them are:

[9] See adh-Dhahabi, *Al-Kaba'ir*.
[10] See ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa*.

1. *Suhur*; it is recommended to delay it until a little time remains before the dawn.
2. *Du'a* while fasting and during the time when breaking the fast.
3. Hastening for *iftar* (breaking the fast) after sunset.
4. Breaking the fast by eating ripe dates; an odd number, but if it is not possible then by [regular] dates, and if not then by water.
5. Organising *iftar* for those who are fasting.
6. Increasing the voluntary acts such as *qiyamul-layl* (standing the night) by *tarawih* (congregational night *salah*) or by *tahajjud* (individual night *salah*), recitation of the Quran, charity, *i'tikaf* (seclusion) in the *masjid*, etc.
7. To take care of praying the *salah* with *jama'ah* in the *masjid*.

And other things like this from the multiple acts of obedience.

Disliked Things While Fasting

1. Exaggeration in permissible things, like exaggeration in rinsing the mouth, sniffing water into the nose, and in tasting food without any need.
2. Leaving the recommended acts of fasting, like hastening the *iftar* and delaying the *suhur*.
3. Increasing in speech other than the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah without any need and spending the night in play.
4. Bad character, like envy, grudges, lying, talking vulgar, and watching things that are *haram*…

And other things like this from the disliked things in fasting.

Permissible Things in Fasting

1. Delaying *ghusl* (shower) for the one who is in *janabah* (state of impurity after sexual intercourse or a wet dream), the menstruating women, or the women bleeding after delivery of her child (if they can be purified),

to after *fajr*.

2. Swallowing things which being cautious of it is not possible, like saliva and dust off the road and things like that.
3. Tasting food due to a need (like for cooking the food, or buying it, or for giving it to children).
4. Smelling perfume or food.
5. Pouring water on the head and body of the one fasting and emerging oneself into water.
6. Treatment by that which does not go to the stomach, like injections (not one which nourishes) into the arms or veins.

Things That Breaks The Fast

1. The nullifying of any condition of the acceptance of fasting, such as apostasy committed by a Muslim, a mentally sound person becoming mentally ill, and the menstruation or post natal bleeding for women.
2. The nullifying of any pillar from its pillars, such as he who intentionally eats and drinks (if he eats or drinks in forgetfulness then his fast is not broken), likewise if someone commits sexual intercourse and semen comes out intentionally (as for wet dreams during the day of Ramadan, then it does not break the fast).
3. Vomiting intentionally (whereas if vomiting overpowers him then there is no blame).
4. Bleeding due to cupping, due to the statement of his (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*): "The one cupping and the one cupped have broken the fast."[11] The one cupping because he swallows from the bottle of *hijamah*, and most of the times some of the blood goes to his stomach. If he uses separate instruments then he does not break his fast.

[11] Collected by Abu Dawud and others; it is authentic.

Finally, we ask Allah that he accepts from us and you, our fasting, *qiyam*, *jihad*, and all of our deeds, and that He lets the month of Ramadan come while we are in the shade of the Islamic Khilafah, and that Baghdad and Damascus are opened for us, and that the male and female prisoners are released from the prisons of the *tawaghit*.

O Allah send *salah* upon our prophet Muhammad, his family, and all of his companions.

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